1999

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The fact that people regularly translate from one language to another or—as the American Bible Society (ABS) New Media Translations Project has done—from one medium to another, may seem to make it easier to evaluate those translations. At some point, people can, and do, claim that one translation "works" while another does not, that one translation has greater aesthetic qualities than another, or that one translation is more faithful than another. The fact that people make such judgments, though, does not necessarily make it easier to explain theoretically how they make them.

Among other things, communication study examines both the process of communicating and the product. What might it contribute to an understanding of fidelity in translation? Various perspectives on communication, reflected in models of communication, can illuminate the process and, indirectly, the attendant question of fidelity. Without attempting any comprehensive treatment, I shall present four such perspectives: communication as transportation, communication as a semiotic system, communication as ritual, and communication as conversation. After a brief introduction to each, I shall examine the consequences of each for fidelity in translation. Finally, I shall offer some more general comments drawn from this treatment.

Early communication theory, following a kind of transportation model, fosters a view of fidelity that favors a sense of equivalence—something that can be measured. Later communication theory follows a more ritualistic view and asks what communicators do with communication; in this view, fidelity becomes more functional. Yet another approach sees communication as a manifestation of semiotic systems; in this view, fidelity manifests surface changes in a deeper structure (see essays by Hodgson and Stecconi in this volume). Finally, an interactive approach places communication as a conversational system; here fidelity takes on a different value—more a characteristic of the audience than of the text.

Communication as Transportation

In an influential review article, James Carey (1975/1989) proposed a distinction between communication as transportation and communication as ritual. By the former he characterized what had dominated North American communication studies through the mid-1970s: a sense that communication primarily involved the transfer or transportation of a message from one person or source to another through some medium or agent.

That kind of traditional communication study diagrams the communication process as a linear process involving a sender (or source), a message, a receiver (or target), a channel (or medium), a context, and various sources of noise. (See Figure 1.) Originally designed by Claude Shannon (Shannon & Weaver, 1949) as a tool for measuring the electronic transmission capacity of telephone circuits where one could compare an input signal to an output signal, the model, despite its mechanistic presuppositions, has found application in roughly identifying stages of communication. This model possesses a certain power since it diagrams various general aspects of communication and thus holds a certain universal applicability—describing communication in situations ranging from face-to-face interaction through written texts to electronic transmission. Eugene Nida and William Reyburn (1981) have successfully applied this model to translation.

The elements of the model identify key "places" in communication. The source or sender originates a message. Note that this implies that the source somehow determines or controls the message, thus becoming the "original" or yardstick against which to measure any copy or transported message. The receiver, or end location of the message, makes its version of the message available for measurement. If the message differs, then some distortion has occurred—due to "noise" in the channel through which the message passed or due to a change in context that affects the resulting process of understanding. This model works well to highlight what occurs in the transfer of a message from one place, or language, to another. It points out the places in which a message might undergo change due to the system of transportation—exactly what an engineer needs to discover. The model

Figure 1: Transportation model of communication.

applies to texts somewhat mechanically, but it does give a degree of insight into the communication process.

With this model, we could describe a translation in one of two ways. First of all, we could regard the translation as an intermediate process. A message source creates a message and transmits it through a medium (the translator) who in turn sends it on to the receiver. The process of translation may inject noise into the translation, though it should adjust the message to the context of the receiver. That very adjustment, though, makes the messages different in language and in presuppositions, as Nida points out in several places. Second, we could regard the translator as the creator of a new message, which reaches a receiver through some channel or other. In this instance, a double process of communication occurs: from the message source to the translator; from the translator to a receiver. In each case, one theoretically could measure the message at each end of the process and compare the two. The preponderance of authority or power remains at the point of origin—in the original, which acts as the yardstick for measurement.

From the sender-receiver transport perspective, fidelity becomes the demonstrated equivalence of the message transmitted from source to receiver. In the simplest (and original) application, one would measure the electronic signal at each end of the model and compare the two. Fidelity results when the received (or transmitted/translated) signal diverges little from the original. In more complicated settings—language translation, for example—one would have to determine an appropriate measure (Thomas, 1994a). Nida and Reyburn illustrate this move by showing how a word-for-word translation does not necessarily result in a faithful translation since it ignores idiomatic usage, cultural conventions, and so forth. They propose instead the concept of functional equivalence, preferring that the translation communicate the same function from one language or culture to another. For example, the biblical phrase, "to beat one's breast," may not communicate sorrow or repentance in all cultures; in some, a different action may serve that function. The faithful translation must change the linguistic phrase to convey the same meaning.

In this kind of linguistic translation, a bilingual speaker, one who understands both the culture of the original or source language and the culture of the target language, best judges the fidelity of the translated work to the original. The sense of measurement implicit in the Shannon model applies almost directly since such a speaker could quantify the degree of deviation of the target from source. Though difficult in practice, that kind of measurement remains fairly simple from the theoretical perspective of the model. (When applied to electronic circuits—the intent of the model—such measurement also remains fairly simple in practice.)

Multimedia translation poses a similar, but a more complex, situation. A message moves not necessarily from one culture to another but from one means of expression to another, usually within the same culture. The means of expression, though, do not parallel each other the way that languages do.

What should a measurement of fidelity measure in this case? This situation touches biblical work in two ways. On the one hand, the process is not completely new for the biblical message, since it has historically undergone a major media transition from oral performance to written text. However, that transition characterizes not only the Bible, but a wide range of texts, and so the conventions of writing have evolved to encompass the rhetorical and oral cues of the spoken word—often slavishly. When people heard words read back to them, they could acknowledge the functional equivalence of the "translation" to writing. One could argue that writing became less a translation than an encoding or a means of storage. (See the essay by Scott in this volume for some examples of this.)

On the other hand, multimedia translation *is* new for the Bible (or any other texts) since it involves both restoring the written text to a performative form and supplying interpretive elements from the rhetorical or oral cues. And so, from the perspective of the transportation model, multimedia translation faces at least five challenges, which I will list in increasing order of difficulty. Throughout this, I am presuming that the translation of a text—the biblical text—has been put into a multimedia form. (See Sisley's essay in this volume as well as Rebera, 1994 for more on these things.)

First, how should one determine the functional equivalence of paralinguistic features? Texts do record rhythm, rhyme, pacing, but an oral performance must go beyond these and include tone of voice, gesture, inflection, and so forth. Visual interpretation adds still other paralinguistic features, ranging from movement to interaction distances.

Second, multimedia translation, of necessity, must include extratextual material. How can any measure apply to this? The receiver ends up with more data than the biblical source presents—for example, the multimedia translation has to specify appearance of actors (body type, clothing), geographical setting, set decoration, and so on. Perhaps one should measure this as noise or as input from a second source (the translator), but the end product certainly differs from the original. As such, the received message differs from the source. At best, the multimedia translation merely disambiguates a text—and that does change the text. One might ask whether this differs from what any reader does—but the role of the reader has received little attention in terms of this model (see Tompkins, 1980).

Third, what should the multimedia translation do with media-specific features? Oral features can be successfully encoded and decoded in written texts. The written text, however, adds its own features: the appearance of letters and words on a page; the addition of sentence, paragraph or chapter markings; the color of inks and papers; and the specific codes of writing. One must acknowledge that the Gutenberg press did something to the Bible. Should these secondary features be ignored or integrated in the translation? Can one separate them out with any degree of confidence? What of the kinds of oral resonances that a text could reproduce by cross-referencing (or a computer by hypertext links)? What happens on the other end—when the

multimedia form has richer features than the original? Hypertext, after all, encompasses much more than oral resonance can. How can we determine fidelity of features non-existent in the source?

Fourth, how might one measure the fidelity of the multimedia rendering of episodes or pericopes? The very division of the text changes the flow of the narrative, yet the multimedia form—at least in the U.S. culture—presumes an episodic structuring. Granted that lectionary evidence indicates that the Church has long treated the Scriptures as episodic, the multimedia form still imposes its own structuring.

Fifth, can there be any kind of equivalence of non-narrative material in a multimedia format? For example, how could one (a) translate into multimedia an expository document like the *Letter to the Romans* and (b) evaluate the equivalence between source and receiver?

Typically and theoretically, from this perspective, multimedia translation depends on the same model of measuring equivalence between source and receiver as does linguistic translation—the judgment of a bilingual speaker, though in this case, we might say, the judgment of an informed media user. The key judgment is whether the message content remains functionally similar.

Communication as Semiotic System

A second, related, perspective drawn from communication studies, sees communication as a semiotic system. This view builds on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1959/1915), who described meaning—first in language and then more generally—in terms of the relation of signifier and signified, which makes up the sign. Others, including the American philosophers C. S. Peirce (1960-1966) and Charles W. Morris (1970/1938), also contributed to this perspective. That work emphasizes levels of signification as well as the process of reference. Virtually any meaning (or signification) system breaks down into signs with their component parts. Signs themselves relate to other signs in many ways but particularly by difference. That is, only signs that differ from one another become meaningful within a given system of signs. In typography, for example, the sign *a* differs from the sign *b* but not from the sign **a**. In addition sets of codes or rules describe how signs take on meaning, with different sign systems or codes following analogical rules—for example, one could describe a verbal code, a clothing code, a gestural code, and so on. Further, the signification process is recursive, so that a sign may take the role of a signifier to form a more complex sign made up of yet more signifieds. (See Figure 2.)

The semiotic system forms a descriptive tool in communication study. Scholars have applied it as a general theory of signs to linguistic or verbal systems (its primary application in de Saussure's writings) but also to graphic, visual, cinematic, cultural, and even culinary systems. Some, in

Figure 2: Parts of a sign according to de Saussure's model, illustrating the recursive nature of signification, where a sign (2) becomes a signifier of another sign.

particular Roland Barthes (1972/1957), show great skill in describing one set of semiotic relations in terms of another (usually verbal) or in untangling the overlaid codes within a complex structure like the novel (1974/1970). Others, including Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969a/1967 & 1969b/1964) and Umberto Eco (1976), have found semiotics valuable to describe cultural and linguistic systems. (See the essays by Hodgson and Stecconi in this volume for additional discussion of the application of semiotics to communication study and translation.)

In this perspective translation might be described as a change of signifier. The resulting signs maintain reference to the same signifieds, but express those signifieds in different forms. If Barthes is correct, for example, clothing expresses cultural relations that could be translated into verbal descriptions. Lévi-Strauss attempts the same thing in terms of kinship relations (1969a/1967) and food preparation (1969b/1964). The resulting verbal description communicates the same information but in a different code. In a different, but somewhat related context, Ong (1997) points out that information (the code) is not communication. Information remains mechanical; people communicate only when they use the code to facilitate an interaction, to exchange meaning (p. 3), to influence another (p. 5). From a theoretical perspective, the translator, then, engages the semiotic code and moves it into communication.

We can also describe this process in terms of layers of structure and the codes (rules, conventions, norms) that give meaning to those structures. The translator determines a sub-surface structure of relations and expresses it in terms of a different set of relations. In semiotic terms, the signifieds and their relations (sub-structure) stay constant while the signifiers and their relations (surface structure) change, resulting in a different set of signs. The meaning and the reference stay the same. For example, one could encode the verbal reference, "I am angry," with a facial expression.

Here fidelity in translation refers to the identity of sub-surface structures and the codes that give them meaning. The decoding/encoding process

needs to follow particular norms so that the surface structures in the two sign systems are equivalent. Theoretically, the process involves more work than that implied in the transport model, but remains essentially simple in description. (See Figure 3). Note, too, that the process of evaluation in this instance does not differ markedly from that involved in the transportation model. The test of fidelity is the recognition of equivalence of the sub-surface signifieds.

Just as with the transportation model, the semiotic model presents a number of challenges to multimedia translation, mostly because of what that translation attempts to do. Multimedia translation of the Bible moves from a verbal sign system to a more complex verbal and nonverbal one. This differs from other uses of semiotics in translation. Linguistic translation stays within at least analogously similar sign systems. Barthes's or Lévi-Strauss's translation work across differing systems takes a verbal system as its target. By moving in the other direction, multimedia work faces many of the same challenges identified above, but some others as well.

First, how do different sign systems work together to create complex systems of signification? While all of us negotiate such complexes in face-to-face interaction (verbal signs, nonverbal signs, tactile ones, and so forth), we do so unconsciously. In a multimedia translation, such decisions become conscious: should we value the visual over the verbal? What paralinguistic signs do we invoke? How does one sign system interact with another?

Second, multimedia translation must, in effect, create a new system of signification; one made up of visual, auditory, and interactive elements. Computer CD-ROM products have led the way here, but have not addressed the level of complexity required by the biblical text. This challenge, though, carries with it a very real benefit: the possibility of a much deeper understanding of the source material since a semiotic translation requires close analysis of the source and an understanding of the semiotic relations it contains.

Third, multimedia translation must discover and use readily accessible conventional signs. While sign systems can be (and indeed are) created, they need ready and wide acceptance in order to be effective. Is there a conventional multimedia "language," one that does not require a skilled reader like a Roland Barthes, a Roman Jakobson, or an Umberto Eco? The

sign 1		>>	sign 2	
signifier 1	signified		signifier 2	signified (=)

Figure 3: Conversion of one sign system to another, retaining the same signified but altering signifiers and, consequently, signs.

availability of such a sign system would facilitate successful understanding of the translation, for if people cannot understand the "language" of multimedia, the translation will do them no good.

There is little precedent for measuring the equivalence of semiotic systems. But, if we regard translation as a kind of transport of meaning or transport of signification, from one language to another or from one medium to another, we can specify key elements in the process. The source (or source text) must in some way control the process; thus, part of the translator's task includes determining which elements contribute to the meaning, which elements constitute the core of the text. Both E.-A. Gutt (1992) and Patrick Cattrysse (1997) suggest ways to do this by examining key sign relations. Once one has identified such elements and created a target "text," one could devise a method of measuring the degree of success or degree of fidelity of the target.

Communication as Ritual

The second part of Carey's distinction describes communication as ritual. Communication, in this view, consists of something we do—a regular performance. Communication is less the transportation of information than the "construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that can serve as a control and container for human action" (Carey, 1989/1975, pp. 18-19). Carey notes that such a view, though new to American communication study, actually predates the transport model, being listed in dictionaries as an "archaic" usage that links the definition of communication to "commonness," "community," or "sharing." He continues:

> A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs.
>
> If the archetypal case of communication under a transmission view is the extension of messages across geography for the purpose of control, the archetypal case under a ritual view is the sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality. (p. 18)

Ritual focuses attention on the uses of communication and the kinds of things that such uses accomplish. Carey's example of the newspaper under this view provides wonderful clarity: the ritual view "will, for example, view reading a newspaper less as sending or gaining information and more as attending a mass, a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed" (p. 20).

Following this model, contemporary communication study envisions the entire process as a kind of participation or activity of communicators, with the receiver or audience holding significant power. The meaning of a given communication results from the process, with message creator and message receiver together evoking the meaning. Ong's clarifying distinction

of information and communication works here, too. Communication, "the exchange of meanings...through a common system of signs" (1996, p. 3, quoting the *Encyclopedia Britanica*), or the influence exerted by one mind on another (p. 5), depends on ritual (the exchange) as much as on information (the encoded message). In other words, information forms a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for communication, as does ritual. And so, here too, the source message retains a measure of authority—within the ritual interplay of communicators, one cannot make a text mean whatever one wishes.

The task of the translator consists in providing the occasion for "portraying and confirming" a view of the world. The ritual experience of participating in the Bible follows from the translator's work. While such an assertion may beg the question of how translation works, it can clarify the goal of translation. Fidelity becomes the creation of similar use, of similar views of the world. Linguistic or semantic identity gives way to community identity and to a kind of inculturation. Ong again offers a helpful note when he remarks that thinking is an event stimulated by communication (1996, p. 5). The transportation or decoding of information is not communication, but only the occasion for it. Similarly, we could argue that the Bible is an event in the life of the believing community. The test of fidelity becomes the reality of that event.

Therefore, if we regard communication as a ritual, we must attend more closely to the role of the audience. How do they use the text? What role does it play in their lives? Their study? Their worship? From this perspective we have to recognize that the source text itself, while still maintaining authority, loses the centrality that it holds in the other two models. Instead the text takes on a variety of roles—and from those roles emerge the places that we could determine fidelity. Here a change in media could well have important consequences for fidelity.

Audience recognition—community adoption—plays a role here. Audiences and critics already make distinctions among translations; these form yet another focal point for an examination of the audience-source-fidelity interplay. For example, people seldom refer to a film or television work as a "translation"; instead they speak of a re-telling, a re-creation, an adaptation, an abridgement, a version, and so on. What differentiates these in the mind of an audience? How much do those terms indicate "adequacy" or fidelity? They do, however, indicate the audience's use of the experience provided by the encounter with the material.

And so, here too, multimedia translation faces some challenges posed by the communication model. The first, as I have just indicated, arises in the necessity to understand the audience (or the community) as it understands the source. How do individuals and communities understand when they participate in communication settings?

Second, how can we determine the ritual uses of this particular communication source material? Do they differ from one Christian community

or denomination to another? Is the translation limited to Bible study or can it equally serve worship and prayer? Does it become a kind of spiritual support to something else? One might take a lead here by looking at other communication rituals—reading the newspaper, watching television, going to movies, and so on. Are these the same or merely analogous uses?

Third, a ritual view invites reflection on creating community as well as on the nature of that community. In asking what defines a Christian community, one should take care to avoid a para-social illusion of community, a situation where individuals mistake a pseudo-community for a real one, as happens for example in television talk shows or soap operas, where audience members feel as though they are part of a (fictional, though regularly meeting) group. James Beniger characterizes these as "superficially interpersonal relations that confuse personal with mass messages and increasingly include interactions with machines that write, speak, and even 'think' with success steadily approaching that of humans" (1987, p. 354). Only a true believing community could be the measure of ritual use of biblical material. In some ways this challenge is not new—it goes back to apostolic times, as both James 2.17 and 1 John 3.17 warn that faith must be accompanied by action lest one fall into the illusion of belief or of community.

Fourth, a ritual view demands another look at the nature of the source material. What status does the Bible hold for the Church? How are the two related? What best characterizes the ritual of the Bible? Clearly, these questions touching on ecclesiologies involve more than translation. But that is the nature of ritual.

This approach to communication study dramatically refocuses attention away from information towards activity. In this view communication maintains community and always takes place in the present, even if it should utilize older materials. In doing so, it recalls the status and the value of communication in an oral culture. As we more and more participate in what Ong terms "secondary orality" the challenge of the ritual view holds greater promise.

Communication as Conversation

A final model of communication takes the face-to-face interaction of people as its starting point. As the semiotic model qualified the transportation model, this conversation model specifies and clarifies the ritual approach to communication. Because it specifies things and because it lies closer to our day-to-day experience, most people find this model more accessible. Conversation consists of ritual behavior: the turn-taking that embodies a back-and-forth movement in which communicators create, sustain, and inhabit a world. It is a place of presence, of mutual disclosure, of interaction, and of a "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1975/1960). We can represent the process itself as a circle through which the conversational partners

Figure 4: A conversational model of communication.

interact, the communication taking place not at any one moment, but throughout the ongoing conversation. (See Figure 4.)

From this perspective the translator becomes a conversational participant. Instead of the conversation occurring between two parties, three act together. Ideally the translator's role appears transparent, but the translator does mediate the source's part of the conversation. Textual translation (including biblical translation) poses an unusual situation for this model in that the translator mediates only one half the conversation. The situation also highlights the question of a "conversation" with a text, though Gadamer and others have explicated that somewhat analogous use of the term. In terms of the Bible, possible activities descriptive of such conversation include Bible study, preaching, prayer, and meditation.

Fidelity becomes an attribute of the conversation, of the act of exchange. Because, to use Gadamer's term, a fusion of horizons takes place, conversational partners must represent themselves honestly. Neither the (translational) source nor the "receiver" can claim absolute power over the interaction; nor can either disregard the other. Much of the work in reader-response criticism bears this truth out (Tompkins, 1980).

In multimedia translation the role of the translator takes on greater significance than that of the inter-linguistic translator. The multimedia group's role is larger and mediates different aspects of the Bible. The conversation more explicitly includes the translator; in other words, the very act of translation becomes opaque.

One test of fidelity results from the extent of engagement in the interaction. If the "receivers" interact in such a way as to recreate the biblical result (faith in the risen Lord, for example), then the translation manifests a degree of fidelity. Another measure of fidelity arises from the community and its formation around the Bible. Much like with the case of the ritual model, the measure of fidelity is the measure of "audience" acceptance. If

people judge that the translation is a good one—if they accept it—then it is a good translation. Different Christian denominations will have their own mechanisms for such judgments—along a continuum from formal offices of doctrine to individual local church assemblies.

Like the other models, this one also identifies some challenges to multimedia translation. First, how can the multimedia material move the users, the participants towards conversation, to a heightened level of interactivity? Given the nature of the medium, multimedia users might be reduced to the role of a spectator or a passive receiver. This result, which can, of course, occur with written materials as well, may be mitigated by certain kinds of interactive designs.

Second, as multimedia translators include supporting materials, they face the temptation of allowing the receptor to lose sight of the priority of the biblical materials. Since the conversation includes the translator, the danger of confusing sources remains a possibility. (This was a criticism of the pre-Reformation Church where the clergy functioned as mediators of the Word.)

Third, any conversation must balance the interaction among the partners. How will a multimedia translation accomplish this? Should there be some kind of training in the use of multimedia translations beyond what might occur for Bible study?

The conversational approach heightens our appreciation of the interactive quality of communication and places the translator within that interaction. The measure of translation becomes a bit less certain since it is judged by community acceptance and use, by the quality of the interaction, or by personal conversation. This perspective clearly differs from the others in that communication scholars tend to focus on descriptive rather than prescriptive approaches.

Concluding Thoughts

Communication study provides a framework in which we can approach the question of fidelity; further, it helps to identify some of the key issues involved, though it may not in itself resolve them. Many of the challenges I have listed here point up those issues and, despite my attaching them to one or other perspective, describe problems that cut across all the approaches.

Each perspective on communication suggests a perspective on the Bible. The transportation or transmission model regards the Bible as valued information that must be delivered from one location to another. The semiotic model also regards the Bible as information, but as encoded information that exists in relation to other codes. Here we become aware of the Bible as part of a larger structure of relations. The ritual model sees the Bible as a container of shared beliefs, as an opportunity for sharing belief, and as a means

of maintaining the believing community. The Bible does not exist apart from the community and any use of the Bible presumes the role of the community. Finally, the conversation model situates the Bible as a partner of the believer or community. It takes life only in the interaction; the Bible manifests the power of the Spirit who acts upon the believer.

The various perspectives also raise questions about translation and the role of the translator. Certainly, the transportation and the semiotic models treat multimedia or visual communication on the analogy of language. But, can we regard visual communication as a language? Is there a language of film? A language of television? Or a language of radio? Treating them as semiotic systems allows for a level of similarity in analysis, but does it suffice for a precise kind of translation? Is it enough for the translator to seek a semiotic equivalence?

Finally, what does a multimedia or "trans-media" translator do in terms of fidelity? Does the question of fidelity occur in comparison with an original or in terms of the use of the Bible? In other words, should we place the problem of fidelity at the beginning of the process or at the end? The former becomes an issue of preparation and the development of some norms or procedures. The latter suggests assessment, the development of some method to measure reception. After considering the communication models, it seems to me that the question of fidelity ultimately becomes one of acceptance by the believing community: an assessment issue. But to work towards this, we have to do an analysis of the procedures at the front end.

Multimedia translation focuses our attention not only on the question of fidelity but on the nature of the Bible itself. Does what translators do change the nature of the translated text? Historical studies show that the use of the Bible has changed over the centuries, as has the nature of the Bible—the manuscript Bible functioned differently from the oral tradition. The advent of the Gutenberg Bible (or, more generally, the printed Bible) similarly changed how people regarded the Bible and how people used the Bible. But these changes do not affect the Bible only; they are part of a larger sweep of cultural change marked out in communication patterns. Multimedia work has identified another phase change and can tell us much about the Bible and the Church in our own day, as well as about fidelity.